

THE AUSTRALIAN AA SERVICE MANUAL

SECTION SEVEN

THE CONFERENCE



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WHY DO WE NEED A CONFERENCE?

The late Bernard B. Smith, non-alcoholic, then chairman of the North American Board of Trustees, and one of the architects of the Conference structure, answered that question superbly in his opening talk at the 1954 meeting in New York:

We may not need a General Service Conference to ensure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined to alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in AA that rebirth which brought us back to life.

We need it because we, more than all others, are conscious of the devastating effect of the human urge for power and prestige which we must ensure can never invade AA. We need it to insure AA against government, while insulating it against anarchy; we need it to protect AA against disintegration while preventing over integration. We need it so that Alcoholics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous alone, is the ultimate repository of its Twelve Steps, its Twelve Traditions, and all of its services.

We need it to ensure that changes within AA come only as a response to the needs and the wants of AA, and not of any few. We need it to ensure that the doors of the halls of AA never have locks on them, so that all people for all time who have an alcoholic problem may enter these halls unasked and feel welcome. We need to ensure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position is.

Figure 5 Why do we Need a Conference?

THE ANNUAL GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE MEETING

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The Australian General Service Conference holds its annual meeting in November. Just what kind of meeting is this? Is it like a Group business meeting only bigger? Is it like an Area Assembly?

Area Delegates coming to their first Conference say it is beyond anything they have previously experienced in AA. To begin with, the Conference spans several days. Then there is overwhelming evidence of the year-long work that has gone into the preparation of the agenda or program. The program is meaty; the Area Delegates, Trustees, National Office staff members and World Service Meeting Delegates are well prepared.

Of course, there is also a great deal of give and take discussion. Many people express themselves, informally and often emotionally. Conference sessions are by no means stiff. Delegates simply act like themselves - which, we know, is the way it should be in AA. While there is full discussion on any question that seems to have various possible answers, everyone tends not to waste time, but to cover the agenda and to stick to matters that affect the movement as a whole.

The Area Delegates come to Conference in November well-prepared, already having shared the experience of past Area Delegates. Then, in the weeks preceding the Conference, National Office has kept them advised of questions and problems that will be up for discussion. They receive a deluge of advance information, filling them in on actions of previous Conferences, on what the committees are, and on what reports they will hear (so that they can "preview" the Conference with their committees and GSRs). They receive just about everything practicable to let them know what to expect when they get to the Conference.

Conference committees are of great help in winnowing out the material that belongs on the Conference floor. These committees first meet early in the Conference period. They go on meeting as frequently as they need for full discussion of each item on the committee agenda. Their recommendations are presented in the committee report. Or, a subject may be reported as discussed with no conclusion reached. Any Conference members who have a problem or a complaint may go to a committee session and present their case. Frequently, there are hot discussions. Toward the end of the Conference, each Conference committee chairperson reads the full committee report to the entire Conference. Every action of the report is then presented separately to the Conference. An action may be accepted or rejected by the Conference, and ample time is allowed for full discussion. The total committee report may then be accepted, or the report may be accepted after the deletion of one or more items.

Later, it will be seen that the National Office Manager, International Delegates and Trustees (members of the General Service Board) are voting members of the Conference. Trustee committee chairpersons also meet with their corresponding Conference Committee for communication and liaison purposes in at least one session.

The National Office staff contribute a great deal of know-how and knowledge of AA history to committee and Conference discussions. However, the National Office people are seeking Conference opinion or guidance, not trying to influence Conference action. The fact is, many of the matters brought to the Conference are those that staff, Trustees or their committees have not wished to act upon during the year. They have felt that these matters were questions of Fellowship-wide importance and so belonged at the Conference.

While no one can speak for AA officially, the Conference comes close to being AA's voice. It cannot be an AA authority, but it can bring into free discussion problems, trends and dangers that seem to affect Fellowship harmony, purpose, and effectiveness. When an entire Conference (or a vocal majority) has expressed concern about a possible threat to our AA program, the Fellowship has listened. It probably always will.

WHO CONFERENCE MEMBERS ARE

At the annual meeting of the Conference in November, Area Delegates should ideally constitute more than two-thirds of the voting members. Other voting Conference members are Trustees, International Delegates and the National Office Manager.

A word about members of the Conference other than the Area Delegates:

The largest number are Trustees (the General Service Board), both non-alcoholic and AA.

The National Office Manager and International Delegates are also members of the Conference.

It should be made clear that each voting member of the Conference has only one vote, no matter how many positions each may hold.

Historically, the voting ratio has never been important in that no issues have ever divided Conference decisions along lines of Area Delegates opposed to other Conference members. But it could conceivably be important sometimes. To take care of that situation, the Charter provides that, as a matter of tradition, a majority vote of the Conference shall be a suggestion to the General Service Board (the Trustees), but a two-thirds vote shall be absolutely binding upon the Board. In practice, the Board and National Office do their best to implement all Conference's Advisory Actions and wishes, as they are expected traditionally and by the Board's *Memorandum of Association* to do so. They therefore report their completion, or explanation to the Conference if unable to comply.

The structure of the Conference has worked out well; experience seems to indicate that it is practical. The Conference itself is not incorporated. But the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Australia (Board of Trustees) is. So would be any companies related to the Australian General Service Board. This incorporation is necessary for the handling of funds and the conduct of business.

WHAT THEY DO

New Area Delegates to the Conference are usually surprised at the heavy work schedule they are faced with. It is a full agenda; a great deal of AA business is transacted in the several days of the Conference. A typical Conference has several morning and afternoon sessions, and also several evening sessions.

What kind of business is transacted? Well, below are some representative actions of past North American and Australian Conferences, which seem to have some effect on the Fellowship as a whole.

Conference Advisory Actions represent recommendations made by the standing committees and approved by the Conference body as a whole; or recommendations discussed and voted on by all Conference members during general sessions. Reports of workshops do not constitute Conference Advisory Actions.

A REMINDER ABOUT 'CHIEFS' IN AA

The Conference comes closer to 'government' than anything else in our Fellowship. But, as Bill W put it in the very first edition of this Manual:

Of course, it cannot be too often said that while the Conference can issue orders to the General Service Office ['National Office' in Australia - Ed], it can never mandate or govern the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves. The Conference represents us, but cannot rule us.

For a full explanation of the checks and balances built into the *Conference Plan*, read *Concept Twelve*, which describes the six "General Warranties of the Conference".

THE CONFERENCE ACTS FOR AA AS A WHOLE

Here is what co-founder, Bill W, has to say about this in *Concept Three* in his "Twelve Concepts for World Service":

Excepting its Charter provisions to the contrary, the Conference always should be able to decide which matters it will fully dispose of on its own responsibility, and which questions it will refer to the AA Groups (or, more usually, to their DCMs or GSRs) for opinion or for definite guidance.

"Therefore, it ought to be clearly understood and agreed that our Conference Delegates are primarily the world servants of AA as a whole, that only in a secondary sense do they represent their respective Areas. Consequently, they should, on final decisions, be entitled to cast their votes in the General Service Conference according to the best dictates of their own judgement and conscience at that time ...

Similarly, the Trustees of the General Service Board (operating, of course, within the provisions of their own Charter and bylaws) should be able at all times to decide when they will act fully on their own responsibility and when they will ask the Conference for its guidance, for its approval of a recommendation or for its actual decisions and direction ...

Within the scope of their defined or implied responsibilities all headquarters service corporations, committees, staff, or executives should also be possessed of the right to decide when they will act wholly on their own and when they will refer their problems to the next higher authority.

HOW TO GET SOMETHING DISCUSSED AT THE CONFERENCE

A GSR, an Area Delegate, or a District Committee Member, may want to discuss the idea first in the Group or at a District or Area meeting. Then it is sent on to the Conference secretary at National Office. That is the normal routing of ideas which are referred to as Conference Topics. See Guideline GL-28 "*How a Conference Topic is Developed*".

Members who are not part of the Conference structure and want to reach the Conference, can give their idea to their GSR or write directly to the Conference secretary at National Office. There the Topic will be passed on to the Conference Agenda Committee.

Other suggested Conference Topics come from staff members at National Office and from the Board and its committees. No matter where the Topic originates, it follows about the same path to the Conference agenda. All Topics received are allocated a Conference Topic number and passed on to the Conference Agenda Committee. At its first meeting in June, the Conference Agenda Committee assigns each Topic to its relevant Conference Committee for discussion at the Conference. Some Topics require further information, or are rejected. Reasons for rejection could be that the Topic has already been discussed at the previous year's Conference or that it is not a matter that Conference can make a decision on, eg an issue which should be resolved at Group level.

The procedure may sound complicated, but it has proved to operate effectively.

The flow chart on page 78 of this Section examines the path of a Conference Topic through to its fruition as an Advisory Action.

ADVISORY ACTIONS

SOME HISTORICAL NORTH AMERICAN CONFERENCE ADVISORY ACTIONS

- Adopted resolution affirming importance of anonymity and approved its wide distribution to press, broadcasting and other media. (Reaffirmed by two later Conferences).
- Agreed that Area Delegates come to Conference being only tentatively instructed for the following reasons: (1) that each Area Delegate brings to the Conference the thinking of their Area, and (2) that the maximum wisdom of the Conference be achieved and voted through the exchange of these ideas at the Conference.
- In regard to misuse of the World Directory: It was recommended that the attention of Groups again be directed to its purpose as listed on the inside directory cover. Recommended that this statement be used as a guide and not a rule, as it is not intended to interfere with free communication between AA's in sharing experience and activities. That non-AA misuse be handled as in the past. (Recommendation reaffirmed by two later Conferences. AA directories now comprise four separate volumes).
- Recommended that AA literature should have Conference approval. That all Conference approved literature show identifying symbol.
- Accepted Bill's manuscript on Twelve Concepts and recommended that it be distributed as a supplement to "The AA Service Manual".
- Recommended that a hard-cover book containing Bill's letters, writings and excerpts from the Grapevine, Big Book, "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions", etc, be published, format and contents to be determined by the Board of Trustees. (Result: "As Bill Sees It - The AA Way of Life.")
- Agreed that, in general, it was not advisable to accept proxies from regular Groups at AA Assembly meetings. At the same time, it was recognised that Groups in correctional institutions and in certain hospitals might be unrepresented at Area Assemblies if they were not permitted to assign their voting privileges to members outside their Groups.
- Suggested that Area Delegates establish lines of communication with directors of tax-supported and voluntary alcoholism programs in their Areas.
- The restructuring plan was approved 92 to 24 to increase the General Service Board to twenty-one, seven of whom shall be nonalcoholic and fourteen alcoholic. (In 1966).
- Approved guidelines for Group separation of AA and Al-Anon.
- Approved position paper concerning clubs organised and directed by AA members, to the effect that such clubs should operate within AA Traditions and abide by them to the fullest extent.
- Approved position paper on rehabilitation centres, to the effect that such rehabs, rest homes and hospitals are not a part of AA and, therefore, have no responsibility to adhere to the Traditions of AA.
- Approved the proposal that the first World Service Meeting be held in New York in the fall of 1969.

- Recommended that showing the full face of an AA member at the level of press, TV and films be regarded as a violation of our Tradition of anonymity, even though the name is withheld.
- Approved division of World Directory into two editions - one for US and Canada, the second for all other countries.
- Approved a survey within AA. Area Delegates agreed to conduct this survey at meetings in their Areas.
- Agreed that the General Service Office should not accept contributions from clubs, listed or known as such, whether or not composed solely of AA members. Contributions are welcome from Groups meeting in clubs.
- Recommended that when an elected Area Delegate cannot attend the annual meeting of the General Service Conference, the Alternate Area Delegate seated at the Conference will be considered the Area Delegate until notification is sent to the General Service Office by the Area Committee that the originally elected Area Delegate is ready to resume his or her duties.
- Suggested that retiring Area Delegates become Grapevine representatives.
- Recommended for institutional Groups: "Open meetings are traditionally open to all interested in AA, but should be devoted exclusively to the alcoholic problem. Closed meetings should traditionally be restricted to alcoholics."
- Suggested that when a local AA facility (Central Office, Group, etc) sells non-Conference approved literature, it be clearly designated as such.
- Recommended that, ever mindful of AA's traditional policy of "co-operation but not affiliation", we continue to meet with organisations outside AA concerned with the problem of alcoholism, for the purpose of improving communications.
- Reaffirmed that all requests for AA directories from other organisations be referred to the Area Delegate. After inquiring about the purpose planned for the directory, the Area Delegate will make a decision re its availability.
- Approved the Anonymity Statement presented by the Trustees' Public Information Committee, with the following reservations: That it be made clear the disclosing one's AA membership to those outside AA be a matter of personal choice and not a matter of obligation That the use of full names and addresses, **where indicated**, could improve communications **within AA**
- Recommended that a Regional Trustee shall not be a candidate for General Service Trustee (US and Canada).
- Recommended that Family Groups not be listed under the Family Group name in the AA directories and agreed that alcohol-and-pill Groups not be listed in AA directories or meeting lists.
- Recommend that all GSRs receive the Group mailings from the General Service Office. Agreed the General Service Office should not be asked to intervene in local disputes or misunderstandings.
- Naming an AA Group after an individual: approved the suggestion that an AA Group should not be named after an AA member or a non-alcoholic living or deceased.
- AA Group policy re "Family" Groups: reaffirmed that "only those with a desire to stop drinking may be members of AA groups; only AA members are eligible to be officers of AA Groups; non-alcoholics are welcome at open meetings of AA." It was suggested that the word "Family" not

be used in the name of an AA Group; that, if AA's and their non-alcoholic mates wish to meet together on a regular basis, they consider these gatherings "meetings", not AA Groups.

- Approved the discontinuance of past Area Delegates' ex officio membership on Conference committees. Past Area Delegates can keep themselves informed of committees' activity through present Area Delegates and the Final Conference Report.
- Approved replacing Part 1 (US and Canada) of the World Directory with three AA directories: Eastern US, Western US, Canada.
- Recommended that the wording of Tradition Eleven remain as is, and that Area Delegates explain to the local membership that "TV" is implicit in the last phrase of the Tradition: at the level of press, radio and **films**.
- Approved the granting of permission to the Eastern and Western Missouri Areas to change from the West Central Region to the Southwest Region.
- Recommended the preparation of an illustrated pamphlet (like "What happened to Joe" and "It Happened to Alice") directed to teen-aged and pre-teen-aged alcoholics.

A SAMPLE OF ACTIONS OF THE AUSTRALIAN GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE FROM 1967

In the earlier years of the Conference's existence, most effort was devoted to streamlining its operation, defining its functions and, most importantly, promoting its awareness insofar as the Groups in Australia were concerned. Since 1967, as well as broadening its base of support, Conference has made some very significant decisions which will vitally influence AA service in this country. Some few of these include:

- 1967 Formation of our own AA Publishing Pty Ltd.
- 1969 Two World Service Delegates appointed by the Australian General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous attended the first World Service Conference Meeting in New York.
- 1970 Appointment of first non-alcoholic Trustee, Dr W.A. (Bill) Spence, subsequently elected Conference Chairperson.
- 1970 Unanimous adoption of resolution authorising the Australian General Service Conference to act for Alcoholics Anonymous Australia. This was modelled on and phrased similarly to the classic Resolution passed at the 20th North American General Service Conference held at St. Louis, Missouri, July 3, 1955.
- 1970 Formation of subcommittees to investigate and prepare means of implementation of AA General Service structure, ie. General Service Board and other service entities modelled on the North American system.
- 1971 National exchange bulletin, "*AA Around Australia*": commenced.
- 1971 Australian General Service Conference gave its approval for its seal to be added to those publications which met with Conference approval for distribution by its publishing operation. This often appears concurrently with the AAWS seal of approval.
- 1973 Implementation of approved regular Group contribution plan, birthday plan and Annual National Convention registration.

- 1973 Approved a maximum personal contribution of \$400 per year, or similar amount from a deceased estate, provided this is made within twelve months of the donor's death.
- 1979 Approved a maximum personal contribution of \$500 per year.
- 1979 AA Publishing Pty Ltd was wound-up and the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Australia assumed responsibility for AA in this country.
- 1980 Approved publication of quarterly national magazine "AntennA"
- 1982 Approved a National AA Survey.
- 1982 Endorsed the formation of Loners Internationalists Australia.
- 1983 Approved the Australian National Office pamphlet for publication and distribution.
- 1984 Approved the production of a banner containing the "Declaration of Unity".
- 1985 Approved a discount package suitable for presenting to interested members of the community at Public Awareness Meetings.
- 1985 Application for formation of Area B, Western Region was received and accepted.
- 1986 Raised maximum contribution from any one member per annum to \$2,000 and from a deceased estate to \$5,000.
- 1986 Accepted first Australian print of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous".
- 1986 Approved that Area Delegates, through Area Assemblies and Forums, encourage Groups to establish a weekly or monthly budget which includes the 60:30:10 Plan (now known as "Group Donation Plans")

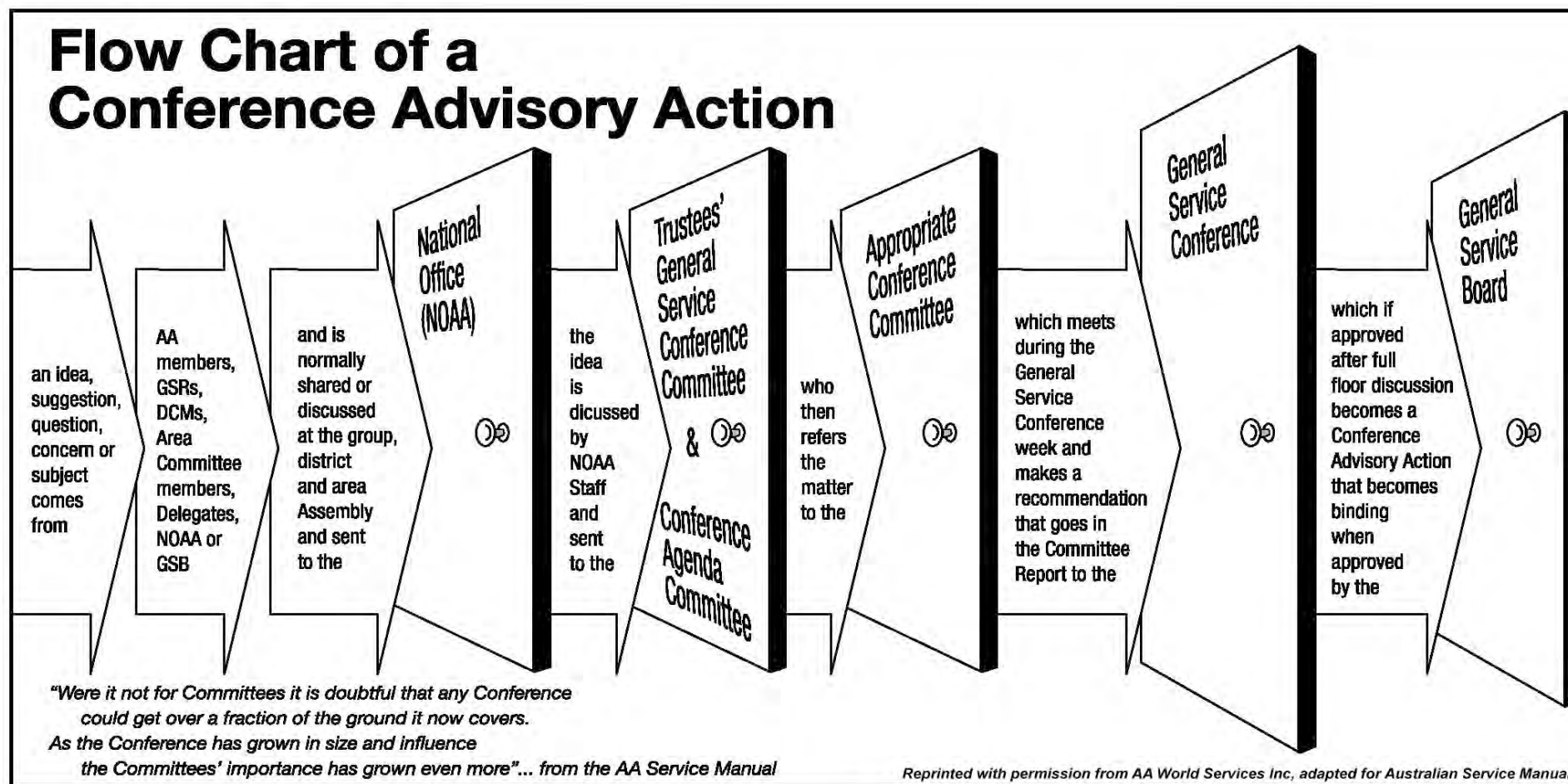
A NOTE ABOUT CHANGING THE AA SERVICE DOCUMENTS

Decisions made by the General Service Conference quite often affect one or more of the AA service documents. These are sometimes referred to as 'constitutional documents' or 'core documents' or 'structural documents'. They are: the *Memorandum & Articles of Association* of the company Alcoholics Anonymous Australia (Limited), the *Conference Charter*, this *Service Manual*, the *AA Guidelines*; the *Conference Administrative Procedures* and the *Composition, Scope and Procedure* documents for all the Board and Conference committees.

These documents form a stable framework for operations, both traditional and legal, within the AA Service Structure. We rely on them to give consistency in the operations of Conference and the Board. For this reason it is imperative that they be clear and concise, and that they all support each other without contradictions, inaccuracies or confusing statements.

When Conference passes an Advisory Action that affects one of these documents, it often also affects one or more of the others at the same time. Changes to them also need special voting procedures. This can be a very complex task, so everyone who handles Advisory Actions should keep an eye out for this special type of Topic. As with so many other AA processes and procedures, there is a *Guideline* that recommends how this should be handled (GL-27). The Board, the Conference Agenda Committee and the Chairs of the Conference sessions are best placed to identify these Topics early in the process, and the Board is responsible to see that their implementation is taken right through to all the required changes in all documents. See "*Document Integration Group*" under "*Trustees' Service Committees, Subcommittees & Other Related Bodies*" in Section 9: "The General Service Board".

ADVISORY ACTION FLOW CHART



KEY: GSR = General Service Representative; DCM = District Committee Member; NOAA = National Office of AA Australia; GSB = General Service Board

See also AA Guidelines GL-27: "Process for Changing AA Service Documents" and GL-28 "How a Conference Topic is Developed"

Figure 6 Conference Advisory Action Flow Chart

REPORTING TO THE FELLOWSHIP

The most productive Conference sessions are of little value unless Area Committees and Groups back home hear about them. So the Area Delegate's reporting job, covering about forty hours of meeting, becomes as important as the program for the Conference itself. No Area Delegate could possibly relate everything that took place; they should prepare a digest of significant discussions, reports and actions and that is no small task.

Over the years, National Office, with the aid of Area Delegates, has developed a system of reporting that has proved to be a tremendous help to Area Delegates and DCMs eager to keep Groups in their Areas and Districts aware of Conference activities.

In a sense, the system starts with the advance information mailed to Area Delegates. This gives them the background for Conference sessions. It "explains" the Conference, not only telling them what to expect, but providing the facts they need to "explain" the Conference to their committees and Groups.

During the Conference, Area Delegates take reams of notes. Much of the reporting material presented there is available in photocopied reports, but personal notes are a vital addition, to give each Area Delegate some points of emphasis in the flood of information. They can turn a tedious recitation into a living, breathing report.

A more complete report is needed, and this is the Conference Report. It is published and goes into detail on reports, discussion, workshops and actions. It is not a verbatim account, but no significant aspect of the Conference is deliberately omitted.

Throughout the year, Area Delegates and Committee Members are kept informed on National Office activities, results of meetings of the General Service Board and of the work being done by the Trustees committees.

With all this material provided for them, it is then up to the Area Delegates and DCMs to get the attention of Groups. Each year, the Group members learn more and more about the whole AA world. They discover that every event in the entire global service picture affects their own AA life sometime, somehow. The Conference is proud of its reporting to the Fellowship. Largely because of this, the membership as a whole is learning to observe and understand the performance of its General Service Conference.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEES AND HOW THEY SERVE AA

Area Delegates carry the major influence in the Conference, and this is felt in two ways:

1. They make up the Conference committees, covering just about all kinds of AA activities;
2. All Area Delegates have free access to the Conference platform for discussion of all actions affecting the Fellowship.

Since the Australian Conference structure was first set up in 1961, a need has developed for Conference committees. Some will correspond closely to working committees of the General Service Board, and each of the pairs of committees liaises profitably during Conference. Representatives from the Board committees assist in the deliberations of the Conference committees by acting as liaison and providing relevant background information.

Were it not for committees, it is doubtful that any Conference could cover a fraction of the ground it now does. As the Conference has grown in size and influence, the committees' importance has

grown even more. Over the years, more committees have been added; each committee has been strengthened. All have ample time to meet and consider the problems before them.

However, no annual Conference meeting is "committee run". A committee meets, deliberates and may reach a conclusion which is reported on the Conference floor for action. Or the committee may decide to pass the problem along to the Conference floor without adding an opinion of its own. But even if a committee reports decisively on its solution to a problem, the Conference as a whole need not accept the report. It can refuse a committee's decision; if it does, the matter is discussed and decided in general session. In typical AA fashion, a Conference committee does not represent "authority".

MAKING UP COMMITTEES

Every Area Delegate serves on a Conference committee. The work of all committees is intensely interesting, as members discover after they have served.

As Area Delegate numbers attending the Australian General Service Conference are relatively small, committee membership averages about 3-5. A new system of back-to-back meetings has been established, to give committees more time for their deliberations.

Allocation to Conference committees is managed by the Conference Coordinator, who is at all times guided by the principle of wherever possible keeping a balance between length of service and geographical Regions. It is impractical to have each choose his or her own post.

Incoming Delegates normally replace the Delegate rotating off. Delegates usually stay on the same committees throughout their tenure. This supports the system of accountability follow-up from the previous year, and enhances continuity.

At one of its meetings in November, each committee chooses by ballot its Chairperson and alternate Chairperson for the next Conference year. The new Chairperson takes office as soon as the current Conference is adjourned.

AA staff members serve as non-voting secretaries of the committees. If it has a counterpart Trustees' committee, the staff member is also secretary of that committee, where practical.

THE CONFERENCE COMMITTEES ARE:

Agenda Committee:

The opposite number of the Agenda Committee is the Trustees' General Service Conference Committee, with which it should maintain contact throughout the year. Of course, this committee also meets on its own, as do all Conference committees. The scope of the committee is to prepare the overall Conference Agenda and to co-ordinate specific agenda items as outlined below. The committee meets three times in each year:

1. In June at the National Office in Sydney to:
 - Review, approve and allocate to appropriate Conference committees the Topics (that is, discussion items, suggestions and Board recommendations) submitted for this year's Conference; and to bring forward only appropriate Topics, and
 - Set the preliminary Agenda for the year's Conference.
 - Review and if appropriate update this document (that is the Composition, Scope & Procedure document).
 - Appoint two committee members to be responsible for compiling a list of suggestions for themes for next year's Conference.

2. As soon as possible after the July Board meeting by way of Teleconference to:
 - Allocate additional Board recommendations to appropriate Conference Committees;
 - Consider suggestions from the Trustee's General Service Conference Committee on ways of improving Conference; and
 - Finalise the Agenda and allocate the rooms for all Conference committee sessions for this year's Conference.
3. In November during Conference to:
 - Remain in constant session to consider changes to the agenda and consider allocated Topics and work out recommendations to Conference;
 - Elect a committee member to ensure that an article on the Conference Theme be with the editor of AA Around Australia by mid January for the March edition, and by mid April for the June edition. This article need not necessarily be written by a member of the Conference Agenda Committee.
 - Elect the new chairperson and alternate chairperson; and
 - Review and if appropriate update the Composition, Scope and Procedure Document.

The Agenda Committee has the year-round job of communicating with National Office on subjects for the Conference Agenda and Theme.

Conference Public Information and Co-Operation with the Professional Community (CPI&CPC) Committee:

Corresponds exactly to the Trustees' committee of the same name and communicates with them each November through the Trustees' committee's Chair, who acts as liaison. The purpose and function of this committee is to further AA's purpose of carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic by informing the general public about AA and by co-operating (while not affiliating) with the professional groups and individuals whose work brings them into contact with alcoholics.

The Public Information and Co-operation with the Professional Community Committee considers Topics that propose new ways to carry the AA message and provide information about the Fellowship to the public. It is also concerned with anonymity breaks and misinformation about AA at the public level. It helps the Trustees' PI Committee gear its efforts to those of local committees all over the continent. It appraises and supports efforts to create mutual understanding and co-operation between the Fellowship and those professional groups and individuals concerned with alcoholism and the sick alcoholic.

Conference Finance Committee:

The Conference Finance Committee has the same concerns as the Trustees' Finance and Budgetary Committee.

The purpose and scope of this committee is to keep abreast of AA's needs nationwide, to study National Office's budget and to take an active interest in its income, with a view to expanding its services to groups and to the public. This committee should liaise at least once a year with the Trustees' Finance Committee, which normally happens through Trustee liaison at Conference time.

Conference Treatment & Correctional Facilities (CT&CFC) Committee:

The Conference Treatment & Correctional Facilities Committee is paired with the Board's committee of the same name. The purpose and function of this committee is to review all aspects of service to AA groups in Treatment and Correctional Facilities, and make recommendations for improvement of communication with such groups. It is also concerned with clarifying what AA can and cannot do within our Traditions to help the patient/inmate alcoholic while inside and upon release. It encourages AA members to assume responsibility for carrying the message to alcoholics confined to long or short term correctional for treatment facilities.

Conference Literature Committee:

The Conference Literature Committee cooperates with the Trustees' Literature & Archives Committee as needed, and communicates in detail through Trustee liaison at Conference.

The purpose and function of the Literature Committee is:

1. To review any recommendations made to the Conference that involve literature or publishing.
2. To review any recommendations directed specifically to the Literature Committee.

The Literature Committee examines all AA pamphlets, printed materials and other media prior to their being presented to full Conference. It has recommended the printing in Australia of all Conference Approved pamphlets as this becomes financially possible, and in 1985 first recommended the Australian printing of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous".

Policies and Admissions Committee:

This Conference committee examines only 'Conference' policy. There is no similar Trustees' committee. The purpose and function of the Policy/Admissions Committee is to review and initiate recommendations involving policies and requests for admission to the Australian General Service Conference.

All changes in the Conference Plan, all steps in the expansion of the Conference, and all procedures affecting the cost of the Conference have passed before the Conference Policy and Admissions Committee. It also has the ticklish job of approving or disapproving requests for additional Areas. As AA Groups multiply, the problem of reaching them via the Conference structure increases. The committee might say: "Go ahead, set up another Area". Or it could say: "You need more Districts, more DCMs, rather than more Area Delegates".

Conference International Committee:

The Conference International Committee, formed in 1999, liaises with the Board committee of the same name and seeks to encourage the Fellowship's participation in international sharing and carrying of our message. The scope of this committee is:

1. To review any recommendations made to the Conference that involve the participation of AA Australia in the wider AA Fellowship.
2. To review any other recommendations directed specifically to the International Committee.
3. To encourage AA in Australia to participate in world-wide service programs.
4. To encourage support in Australia for the International Sponsorship Fund.
5. To see that updated local information is provided for the AOSM Directory.

6. To see that the distribution of the AOSM Directory and Newsletter to CSOs and Areas around Australia is actively promoted.
7. To ensure that a register is maintained by National Office of AAs with languages other than English – as sponsors, translators, checkers.
8. To support and encourage actions that promote understanding of our responsibility to carry our message anywhere, both outside and inside Australia, including ethnic communities.

Report, Charter & Service Manual (RC&SMC) Committee:

There is no similar Board committee, although the committee liaises with the Trustees' Literature & Archives Committee and with the Document Integration Group set up by the Chairman of the General Service Board from time to time (see Section 9: "The Board"), to which it contributes one member.

This committee has the responsibility for:

1. Considering any proposal or recommendation for change in "The Australian AA Service Manual" (which includes the *Conference Charter*) and in "Twelve Concepts for World Service", and offering these recommendations to the Conference.
2. Proposing any alterations considered desirable for improving the format, method of reporting, style or content of the *Conference Report*.
3. Reviewing the rough draft of the *Conference Report* with careful attention to accuracy, completeness of reporting, together with any other suggestions that may occur.
4. Establishing a deadline for examining the rough drafts and returning to National Office with corrections or suggestions.

Conference Committee on Trustees:

This committee liaises with the Trustees' Nominating Committee and has the task of reviewing standards, appointment processes and résumés for elected trusted servants of Conference.

1. This committee is responsible for overseeing and reviewing standards, appointment processes and résumés for Class A Trustees, Class B Regional Trustees and General Service Trustees, and for International delegates.
2. At Conference the committee reviews résumés of all nominees for members of the General Service Board and International Delegate positions, and prepares a report of this review which shall include reasons for the committee's disapproval of nominees, if any, based on the Trustee Qualifications outlined in the "Australian General Service Manual".
3. The chairperson of this committee presents this report to the entire Conference for disapproval if any, before these nominees go forward for election either by the General Service Board or the Conference.
4. If any unexpired term of a Class A, Regional or General Service Trustee or International Delegate must be filled between Conferences, the nominees' résumés are sent by the Trustees' Nominating Committee to the committee members for review before any election is held.
5. The actions of this committee will contribute to the continuous success of our Services. Careful deliberation and analysis of all résumés, painstaking investigation, refusal to accept casual recommendations: these need to be the guiding principles of this committee.

HOW COMMITTEES SERVE AA

In keeping with the best Tradition of AA, we find that whatever 'authority' exists, is first expressed in the *Group Conscience*, then passed along through the Group representatives to the Conference, then from Conference to Trustees. The Conference Committees are responsible for seeing that this is done between Conferences, and to maintain communication with National Office, regarding their progress, throughout the year.

How effective has the pattern of Conference committees been? What Conference actions have they been responsible for? How well have they functioned between Conference meetings?

As in the case of almost any sort of committee, a great deal depends on the chairperson. If this member is active, the committee starts to hum and keeps on humming.

However, Conference committees have another factor in their favour. Their secretaries, usually staff members, are vitally interested in the contributions of their committees.

Every day, staff members are involved with the service Areas that are the committees' responsibilities, and in fact carry out most of the actual work for which the committees are responsible. The committees are important to staff as a means of getting answers to problems and indications of new service opportunities, in order to support their efforts in working with Groups all over the country.

Down through the years, Conference committees have brought about many actions vital to AA's health and growth.